

Information & Technology TIP OF THE WEEK ARCHIVE

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Be nice to computer to avoid problems

Tech-support workers will tell you a small number of users generate the most repair work. They say these folks are nearly full-time employment for them.

I did a little inventory of my e-mail, subject line "Help!" I found that, indeed, I'm often getting cries for assistance from the same people.

Their messages always begin the same way: "My computer has a problem." Yeah, it's the person sitting in front of it.

Techies call these folks "devil users." They're hell on computers.

If you're constantly having problems, you should examine your computing habits. Your system may not appreciate the way you're using it. Correct your bad habits and your problems may disappear.

Nearly all of these center on impatience. I know, computers are supposed to be fast, but they still need time to interpret your command and act on it.

The No. 1 system-wrecking habit is the easiest to correct. If you simply turn off your computer with the power switch, as you would a TV, you're asking for it.

All systems need a proper shutdown. They run a little routine that first saves any configuration changes to your hard drive and then makes a backup of your prior configuration in case the new one is bad. Pressing the off switch bypasses this, not good for system

health. Before shutting down, save all the data you've created and shut down any programs you have running. This is good housekeeping.

Then run the shutdown routine. Click on Start, Shut Down, and wait until your screen clears. It's amazing how many users sidestep this.

You need patience on the other end, when your system boots up. It's loading a number of important drivers and other programs. You'll see icons appearing in your toolbar and hear your hard drive moving. Be still and wait until all that stuff has stopped loading before launching any programs. This insures your system is ready for your commands.

A common complaint is that a system suddenly is slowing down on starting. This can happen if you file all of your data in the C: root directory, the first folder on your hard drive. I've found hundreds of data files there in many systems.

When your computer boots, it first checks this root directory for advice on what start-up files to load. The more extrane-

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08/02/03 **Running out of space on the hard drive** is something almost everyone runs into. One of the best **tools to use to find and delete** spe Menu. (For older versions of Windows, use Windows Explorer, located on your Start Menu, under Programs. You can use the TOOLS drive for specific files). I'll show an example of using **Search** in the tips.

Here's a common list of files to delete:

Clean out the Windows\Temp directory. Delete all files and folders in the c:\windows\temp directory. It's best to reboot after clear delete. (Some files can't be deleted because they are locked while your system is running).

Delete program temporary files. Take off any file on your drive with a .tmp extension or a tilde (~) as the first character of the extension. Execute a search for a filename of *.~?? to find these files.

Clean out backup and log files. Look for backup and log files with extensions such as *.old, *.bak, *.log, *.000, *.001, *. extensions can be safely deleted.

Don't believe everything you read. Be wary of "technical" pages and tips that tell you it's safe to delete any .wav, .hlp, .jpg, . extensions). I recommend you **do not delete** these file extensions. Going through your PC and erasing these files has the potential to well-meaning "tips" mean the files are "safe" to delete only in a technical sense (these file types typically aren't tied to the registry as executables) For the *safest cleanup* when trying to gain space on your system, stick with the file types recommended here.

Delete scandisk leftovers. Look for lost cluster dump files, usually in your root directory with the extension *.chk (file????.chk) large, and can safely be removed.

Empty browser cache. Empty your Netscape or Explorer cache (look in the options in the each program for a "delete cache files" button under TOOLS on the top menu bar in INTERNET OPTIONS)

Dump movies from the Windows folders. On older versions of Windows, delete files in your c:\windows folder with a .avi extension. These are relatively useless "help movies" which show you how to click on things...

Move programs to gain space. If you have multiple hard drives, try uninstalling games or programs and reinstalling them onto other

After deleting, check your system. After going on a massive hunt and delete "mission", always reboot your system and run scandisk Accessories, System Tools).

Cleanup the drive. Empty the trashcan, or Recycle Bin.

Reboot the PC.

07/14/03 **How to Use the Function Keys in Windows**

The function keys (**F1 - F12**) provide some interesting shortcuts for common computer functions that can be useful tools in everyday computing. TI combination with other keys such as the CTRL key, the ALT key, and the Shift key. This results in a plethora of possible keyboard shortcuts.

Here is a brief rundown of the function keys and what they can do for you.

F1

As a throwback to DOS days, you will find that the F1 key will often bring up a help menu. If you press F1 while working in a program, help for that F1 while at the Windows desktop or when the Windows Explorer is open, a Windows help screen will pop up. If you happen to be working in a program screen, simply press the Windows key (the key with the Windows logo on the bottom row of keys) on your keyboard and press F1 at the same time

F2

You can use the F2 key to rename an item when working in Windows. Highlight any folder or file, and press F2. You will then be able to type a new new name, just click outside the name box or press the enter key to make the name change. This works just like right-clicking a file or folder and sel

F3

When you are working in Windows, the F3 key will open the Find Files window.

F4

The F4 key has some very useful functionality. You can press F4 to open the Address bar when working in Internet Explorer. This will allow you to t access. You can also press the Alt key and the F4 key at the same time to close the open Window that you are currently working on.

F5

The F5 key is the refresh key. You can press F5 when viewing a Web page to make sure that you have the most current version of that Web page. to refresh the screen. This can be a handy shortcut. If perhaps you are viewing the contents of a floppy disk and you insert a new floppy, your scre first floppy. Just press F5 to refresh the screen and see the contents of the floppy you just inserted.

F6

This key is often used to move the cursor around the structure of the program. Pressing it will often cycle you from window to window.

F7

The F7 key does not have any functionality in Windows. It may, however be used in some individual programs. To find out if it is available in the prc program's help screen and type in the words function key.

F8

The F8 key can be used to access Safe Mode if pressed during the computer's boot up process. This is a trouble-shooting mode, which will start the

F9

The F9 key does not have any functionality in Windows. It may, however, be used in some individual programs. To find out if it is available in the pr program's help screen and type in the words function key.

F10

F10 is the key that is used to activate the menu bar in many programs. You can use F10 to highlight the first menu choice, and then use the arrow Pressing the Shift key while pressing F10 will bring up the shortcut menu. This is similar to right-clicking on an object.

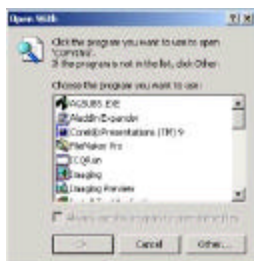
F11

Press F11 when you are working in Internet Explorer and the window will open to full screen mode. This will make all the toolbars disappear and can t screen. Press F11 when you are in full screen mode will toggle you back to your normal view.

F12

The F12 key does not have any functionality in Windows. It may, however be used in some individual programs. To find out if it is available in the pi program's help screen and type in the words function key.

07/01/03 **What to do when your computer doesn't know how to open a file** ***This TechTip Applies to computers running Windows***



If you use email to communicate with your constituents and allies, then you've probably received an email an attachment that your computer doesn't know how to open.

When this happens, you're likely to see this dialog box:

The problem that your computer is having is that it can't identify which program to use to open the which program to use based on a file's extension. File extensions are the three-letter extension th The file extension tells your computer what program it needs to use to properly open the file so that extensions, click on the *Start Menu*, and select *Settings*, then select *Folder Options*. From the *Folc View*, and make sure that box for "Hide File Extensions for Known File Types" is unchecked. If you the files all have a three letter extension at the end of the filename, so a Microsoft Word document extension.

05/07/03 **GIVING NOTEPAD THE TIME OF DAY**

Notepad is a handy little application that you can use for editing simple text files. It is often used by seasoned computer professionals for everything from script files to log files.

Here's a tip that can make Notepad even handier.

Simply pressing F5 will insert a time and date stamp.

Another little-known trick that Notepad will do is automatically insert a time and date stamp into a log file just by opening it.

To implement this, create a blank text file with ".LOG" in the first line of the file (without the quotes, but in all caps). Press Enter on the first line, then save and close the file. From then on, anytime you open the file with Notepad, it will place a time and date stamp at the position the cursor on the line below.

04/28/03 **Is a shortcut on your desktop no longer working properly? It could be that the location or address of the file or URL it's pointing to has changed. You could go through the procedure of verifying the correct path to the program or URL, but the easiest way is to delete the shortcut, then Copy and Paste Shortcut back to your Desktop.**

NOTE TO KENTUCKY CORRECTIONS EMPLOYEES:

Desktop shortcuts to Kentucky Website locations are not guaranteed. Please use the links provided on the Department's webpages to ensure correct access.

03/31/03 **You have this really nifty picture that you want to send to Uncle Sam or your Great Aunt Matilda, but your email program can't do it. The dimensions of the photo aren't the problem! (Unless you're trying to send a poster sized photo)**

The problem is probably the type picture you're trying to send. Look at the 3 letter extension on the picture name. This indicates the common type. The most common types are

.bmp
.tif
.gif
.jpg

Bmp and tif images are usually the largest, being virtually uncompressed files, and jpg images are usually the smallest, due to their high compression.

To change the image type, you need to open it in an image editing program like PaintShop Pro® or PhotoDeluxe®, but most image editors can save in different formats. If you save the .bmp file as a .jpg file, check on the Options button and make sure the compression is at the lowest level as possible to the original.

In most cases, the image will now be small enough to send by email.

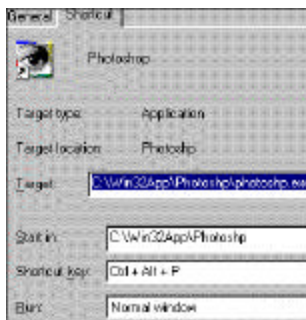
03/03/03 **Get Fast Access to your Favourite Programs**

Double-clicking on program shortcuts on your desktop is a quick way to access programs, but there's an even faster way.

You can create keyboard shortcuts to your favourite applications.

To do this:

1. On the desktop, right-click on the desired program icon.
2. Choose Properties from the menu and then click on the Shortcut tab. A window like the one below will pop up



3. In the Shortcut key field, you will see "None."
4. Click on the field and press the letter A or any letter you'd like to associate with the program.
5. The text in the field will change to Ctrl + Alt + A or whatever letter you choose.

Now when you press the Ctrl, Alt, and A keys at the same time, that program will launch.

02/24/03 **How to use a Web graphic as your Desktop background**

Want to use a graphic from a favorite web site as your wallpaper? No problem. The process is as simple as right-clicking on the graphic.

Here's how:

1. In Internet Explorer, surf to the desired graphic.
2. Right-click on the picture and select Set as Background. You can further customize the wallpaper by right-clicking on an existing desktop background and selecting Properties. Click on the Desktop tab and choose to Stretch, Center or Tile the picture.

01/27/03 Secure Passwords

Creating and maintaining a secure password is one of the most important things you can do to protect your data and infrastructure. In order to ensure that your computer remains secure and free from compromise, all passwords should be at least 11 characters long (11 is better). Passwords should be comprised of upper/lower case letters, numbers, and at least one special character (if allowed) and must not include dictionary words, phrases or names.

Sure, all of this sounds like a good idea, but how do you remember such a complex, cryptic password? Below are a few policy-compliant passwords that you can remember:

Combine first letters from a phrase. Lines from poems or songs often work well. For example, "Four score and seven years ago" could be written as 4s&7YaOf.

Remove vowels and consonants from words. Take a short phrase and take out all of the vowels or consonants. For example, "Jack and Jill went up the hill" would be translated to Jck n d Jll wnt up th hll.

Create pseudo words. Link one or two consonants followed by one or two vowels and repeat the pattern. The idea is that it sticks with you but that does not appear in any dictionary. You will also have to mix in some numbers and special characters. For example, prAu*cd9.

01/21/03 Quick desktop access

When working in Windows your screen view can get quite cluttered, making it difficult for you to access the desktop. You may have a large number of folder windows open and be working with several applications.

You can always select among application and folder windows by clicking on the appropriate icon on the taskbar. It can get down to the desktop to access shortcuts you may have there.

Instead of minimizing each open window one by one, there is a quicker way. If you right-click on any open space or on a taskbar icon (if you can find some), you can select the minimize all windows option and have instant access to the desktop.

01/06/03 Your e-mailbox is full and you can't send or receive email?

This tip refers specifically to Microsoft Outlook, but the same procedures apply to any other email program.

Email programs usually keep all mail folders in a single file, with a .pst extension (this will vary depending on your program). When this server to maintain, nothing else can be added to it and you can't send or receive anything more.

What to do?? You've cleaned out your Deleted Items folder (trash folder, etc), but it didn't help?

If you have any other folders under your mailbox, check them for items you can delete. (Sent Items, Journal, Outbox, Contacts, Calendar, etc). This adds to your total mail folder size.

12/09/02 Your computer is trying to tell you something...

Have you ever read (really read them, word for word) any of the messages that appear on your monitor from time to time when something goes wrong? Most people don't, or they don't understand the message so they don't write it down.

The first thing most tech support people will ask is what the messages said. This tells them much more than you might suspect about the problem. So, give your tech people a break and let them know what your computer is trying to tell you.

12/02/02 DELETE INSTEAD OF RECYCLE BIN

To immediately delete a file rather than send it to the Recycle Bin, hold down the Shift key when you delete it.

11/25/02 Quick Access To The Desktop

You can get quick access to the desktop (if you have lots of windows open) by right clicking on the task bar and choosing Minimize All. After you have completed the task you wanted to perform, you can restore all the windows to their original state by again right clicking on the task bar and choosing Maximize All.

11/12/02 Load Windows Faster

Have you ever turned on your computer and just wanted to get into a program but had to wait for Windows to load?

Well, there are these little programs in your "Start Up" folder, that are launched when Windows is loading, that add to the already long load time.

If you hold down the SHIFT key while Windows is loading, you will by-pass these programs in the "Start Up" folder. Doing this will speed up the loading process because it won't be launching additional programs.

11/04/02 Would you like to see how much disk space you're using?

SEE THE DISK SPACE OCCUPIED BY A FOLDER AND ITS SUBFOLDERS: Right click on the parent folder and choose Properties. This will show you the size of the sub folders and files contained therein as well as the size of the combined folder content. **QUICKLY SEE THE CAPACITY AND FREE SPACE ON A DRIVE:** Open My Computer and select the drive you want information on. The status bar at the bottom of the screen will display the info for that drive.

10/28/02 Would you like the clock on your computer to display the time in a different format?

To change the way your time is displayed on your PC taskbar tray, go to Start, Settings, Control Panel and double-click the Region and Date-Time icon. Click the Time tab. Under Time Style (or Format), choose the style you prefer for the time. The HH means 24-hour time rather than AM/PM.

10/21/02 Have you ever wanted to put a shortcut on your desktop to take you quickly back to the web page you're viewing?

Click the e icon in the upper left corner of your Internet Explorer browser or to the left in the address field and drag it to your desktop. This shortcut will allow you to return to this website at any time.

10/14/02 Has your computer changed from a Hare to a Tortoise?

Your processor and bandwidth are not unlimited! The more programs you're using at the same time, the less your programs have. Check to see if you have any programs running that are eating up your processor speed and bandwidth, (and uninstall them if you can).

WEBSHOTS
COMET CURSOR
GATOR
SAVE NOW
SPINNER
REAL AUDIO
WEATHERBUG

There are many more, but as a rule of thumb, if there's an icon in your taskbar tray (the right side of the taskbar) the program is running in the background.

10/07/02 Sometimes the keyboard is quicker than the mouse:

F1: Start Windows Help.
F2: Edit the selected filename in Windows Explorer.
F5: Refresh the Folder List in Windows Explorer.
F7: Start spell check.
Alt+(underlined letter in menu): Open the corresponding menu.
Alt+Tab: Switch to another running application. Hold down the Alt key and then press the Tab key to view the task-switching window list.
Alt+space: Display the main window's System menu. From the System menu, you can restore, move, resize, minimize, maximize, or close the window.
Alt+F4: Close the current window.
Alt+down arrow: Open a drop-down list box.
Alt+- (Alt+hyphen): Display the Multiple Document Interface (MDI) child window's System menu. From the MDI child window's System menu, you can move, resize, minimize, maximize, or close the child window.
Alt+F6: Switch between multiple windows in the same program. For example, when the Notepad Find dialog box is displayed, Alt+F6 switches between the Find dialog box and the main Notepad window.
Shift+F10: Open a context menu for the selected item. This is the same as right-clicking an object.
Ctrl+Esc or ALT+S: Open the Start menu. Use the arrow keys to select an item.
Ctrl+Tab: Switch to the next child window of a multiple document interface (MDI) application.
Ctrl+F4: Close the current multiple document interface (MDI) window.
Shift: Press down and hold the Shift key while you insert a CD-ROM to bypass the autorun feature.

09/30/02...A few quick ways to select, highlight and modify text in MSWord:

Place your cursor (the cursor is not the flashing line that shows where the text will appear, but the pointer you can move with your mouse) at the beginning of the text you wish to select. Hold down the shift button and press the up or down or left or right directional arrow on your keyboard to select the text. After the text is selected you can execute any text function you desire.

To select a single word move the cursor on the word and then double click on the word. To select the entire paragraph triple click on the first line of the paragraph.

09/23/02...PC SHUTDOWN:

For optimum PC performance, the manufacturers' recommendation is that PCs be shut down and powered off once a week (Friday, Saturday, or Sunday).

09/23/02...TO SHUT DOWN WINDOWS NT PROPERLY:

Hold down the Ctrl and Alt buttons and then hit the Del button. A dialogue box will appear with several choices. Choose the option to "Shut down and Power Off" then click "OK". This will allow you to close out all open programs and shut down the PC.

[Top of Page](#)